





















看不見的

長城

The Invisible  
Great  
Wall

Preface

When Yang Liwei, China's first astronaut, returned to the ground and truthfully reported in 2003, "I did not see the Great Wall from the space shuttle," what he said not only aroused a little controversy but also disappointed many Chinese.

Just as not every astronaut could see the Great Wall from the sky, not every person on earth could personally walk along the entire Great Wall.

The Great Wall, more than 5,000 kilometers long, has been in existence for 2,000 years, and depending on such factors as time, location and circumstances, the image of the wall has varied in the eyes of different people.

In the eyes of the First Emperor of Qin, the Great Wall was a protective screen against possible invasion by the Xiongnu, a northern nomadic tribe that fought on horseback. During the same era, it is said, a woman named Meng Jiangnu through tear-filled eyes saw the Great Wall as a grave for her husband who died building it under forced labor.

In the eyes of the nomadic tribes, the Great Wall was a barrier that blocked their march on horseback southward.

In the eyes of soldiers defending the wall against the northern invaders, the Great Wall was more like a "kindred brother" standing with them to guard the homeland.

In the eyes of some historians, the Great Wall appears more like a stern and strict father separating two fighting sons, forcing them to stay on good terms and not allowing them to hit each other. In the eyes of other historians, however, the wall was more of a conservative old

man doggedly hanging on to old ways of thinking and refusing to progress with the times.

What one person sees is often what another misses. And so it is that the Great Wall exists in entirely different images in the minds of different people.

In the lens of photographer Li Shaobai, the Great Wall is reflected in a variety of images ranging from cows and sheep grazing by the wall to elderly farmers leaning against it for a rest, to crops lying beside it just harvested, to rapeseed plants blossoming along it and wild buckwheat blooming on the mountain slopes around it ... and, long after the flames of war have died out on its watchtowers, the calm and indifference of the Great Wall.

But the photographer is not content only with capturing the architectural beauty of the Great Wall. He also has incorporated his own sensibilities and experiences in a quiet and harmonious way through his careful selection of settings, the tempo of his narratives and the composition of the scenes he has captured. Despite a restrained approach to revealing his personal feelings, his pictures inevitably are tinged with their subtle but insistent presence whether the photograph itself is in bright light or haze.

Mr. Li tries to tell the history of the Great Wall through his camera lens, confident that the wall he sees and feels has not been seen by others—or even if seen, unacknowledged.

This is the very purpose for the publication of this art book entitled *The Invisible Great Wall* and the very reason why the Great Wall still stands tall and mighty. 🏰



# Touching the Great Wall




The ancient architectural wonder of the Great Wall—having witnessed the rise and development of ancient civilizations, the comings and goings of various feudal dynasties, the hardships and interactions and assimilations experienced within the Chinese nation—over time has evolved, as its defensive and military functions gradually disappeared, eventually to become a symbol of a powerful national spirit and a profound national culture.

According to the *Modern Chinese Dictionary*, the term “five-thousand-kilometer Great Wall” is used as a metaphor to... “describe an invincible force and insurmountable barrier.”

The Chinese national anthem *March of the Volunteers* begins, “Arise, ye who refuse to be slaves; with our very flesh and blood, let us build our new Great Wall.” Sung for generations, the anthem reinforces the humanistic and cultural value of the Great Wall as a spiritual symbol. People come close to the wall and sing its praise. They touch it and remember it. They touch the bricks once soaked with the blood of border guards who fought so hard to defend it, and they touch the sandy soil that has been breaking down over the years in solitude.

The long history of the Great Wall is one of antagonism between different ethnic groups as well as their coming together and assimilating. It is one of self-imposed closing to the outside world and also one of seeking active contacts and exchanges. It is one of ancient people having to leave home to work like slaves, but it is also one of having to defend against invasion to secure peace and stability. It is one of generals and soldiers shedding their blood and giving up their lives, as well as one of wives and mothers left in empty homes shedding tears.

To touch the Great Wall is to touch history.

To touch the Great Wall is to touch the strongest pulse, beating for centuries, of the Chinese nation. 

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序



2003年，中国第一个太空人杨利伟从太空旅行回来后说，『我没有看到长城。』不仅惹来争议，更让很多中国人感到失落。

就像宇航员在太空中不一定能够看见长城一样，在地球上，就在我们的身边，也没有人曾经真正地看遍长城。事实上，也不可能有人能够真正地看遍长城。

两千多年的时光流转，十万里的纵横逶迤，因时间、地点和人物的不同，人们眼里的长城也各异。

在秦始皇看来，长城是抵御匈奴入侵的屏障，而在孟姜女婆婆的泪光中，长城是活埋了自己丈夫的坟墓。

在游牧民族的骑士看来，长城是阻挡他们挥戈南下的险隘，而在守土戍边的士卒眼里，长城是和他们一起护卫家乡的骨肉兄弟。

在有些历史学家看来，长城是隔开吵架兄弟的严父，只准他们和平交往，而不许他们挥拳相向，而在另外一些历史学家看来，长城是一个封闭落后的守旧老人，一味消极防守，不思积极进取。一个人看到的，往往是另一个人忽略

的。长城就是这样，在不同人的心目中，留下了千差万别的影像。

在摄影家李少白的镜头里，长城的影像也是千差万别的。牛羊漫过颓圯的墙体，老农靠在墙下小憩，收割后的庄稼地，开满油菜花、荞麦花的原野……在军事特征的反衬下，长城有了烽烟散尽后的平和与淡泊。

但李少白并不满足于记录和再现长城的建筑美。面对长城，他在场面的调度、叙事节奏与画面的安排等方面，都不露痕迹地融入了自己的情感体验，在明朗或者阴暗的影调后面，李少白虽然不事张扬，但其个体体验却总是固执地存在，若隐若现。

李少白试图通过他的镜头，通过镜头里的长城，叙述并且反思长城的历史。李少白相信，他所看见的长城，他面对长城所生发的感喟，很多人或者是根本就看不见的，有些人虽然看到了，或许是视而不见的。

这就是我们出版这本画册的目的。也是长城依然挺立，而这本画册名为《看不见的长城》的原因。





## 触 摸 长 城

经历过古老文明的发生发展，目睹过封建王朝的更迭兴衰，见证过中华民族的磨难与交融，时光流转，世事沧桑，当防御作用和军事功能渐渐淡去，长城这座古老的建筑，却最终陶铸成一种大气若虹的民族精神和文化内涵。

《现代汉语词典》是这样解释长城的，『指万里长城，也用来比喻坚强雄厚的力量，不可逾越的障碍等』。

『起来，不愿做奴隶的人们，把我们的血肉筑成我们新的长城。』《义勇军进行曲》的世代传唱及其被法定为中华人民共和国国歌，更是确定了长城作为中华民族精神象征的人文价值。

人们走近它。人们歌颂它。人们追忆它。人们也触摸它。

触摸它浸润过守城将士鲜血的冰冷的城砖，触摸它在孤寂守望中风化漫漶的黄土……

长城的历史，既是民族对峙的历史，也是民族融合的历史；长城的历史，既是闭关自守的历史，也是积极交往的历史；长城的历史，既是人民背井离乡、苦役深重的历史，也是防止侵扰、护佑一方平安的历史；长城的历史，既是将军血染黄沙、慷慨赴死的历史，也是思妇独守空房、夜夜垂泪的历史……

触摸长城，就是触摸历史。

触摸长城，就是触摸千百年来中华民族血脉中最强劲的律动。



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血泪·丰碑

对峙·融合

时空·风云

流逝·永恒

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# Blood, Tear and Monument

For hundreds of years, debate has swirled around the Great Wall: Is the Great Wall a gigantic monument of history, or just a very old structure soaked in blood and tears? Is it the strongest and most effective military defensive work of its era or is it simply a symbol of conservatism, self-imposed closure and retreat? Is it a symbol of the persevering spirit of the Chinese nation, or a product of narrow-minded nationalism?

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